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AUTHOR Haynes, John B.
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ABSTRACT

A comprehensive needs assessment of correctional institution inmates was developed to determine the recreation and physical activity needs of male youthful offenders. The target population consisted of male youthful offenders between the ages of 18 and 21, most of whom were high school dropouts. Formal interviews and a variety of instruments were used to determine self concepts, physical ability, and background information. The results generally supported the predicted relationships among the offenders indicating negative self concepts (especially physical self concept), low self ratings in a variety of sports, a low level of circulorespiratory endurance, and poor skill performances in selected team sports. Results not expected included the inmates' enthusiasm for past school gym classes, desire to excel in physical activity, and interest in individualized physical education. Recommendations for a physical education program based on these results involve student selection of activities, performance objectives based on potential, and the use of trained physical educators, teacher aides, and undergraduate volunteers. (Author/CJ)

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PHYSICAL EDUCATION FOR YOUTHFUL OFFENDERS IN A VIRGINIA CORRECTIONAL INSTITUTION: A PRELIMINARY REPORT

John B. Haynes

Madison College

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Temple University

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PHYSICAL EDUCATION FOR YOUTHFUL OFFENDERS IN A VIRGINIA CORRECTIONAL INSTITUTION: A PRELIMINARY REPORT.

John B. Haynes, Madison College, Harrisonburg, Virginia

Given the AAHPER conference theme of human rights focusing also on diverse target populations, the basic need of inmates in correctional institutions for physical activity and recreation would seem to be an appropriate area for inquiry. Recent legal developments indicate an increased awareness of prisoners' rights including living conditions and adequate recreation. Beyond such humanitarian reform involving the prison environment, the trend toward advocacy of rehabilitation and various federal projects suggests the relevance of an effective physical education program. The purpose of this paper is to provide a brief summary of a comprehensive needs assessment as a preliminary report on a physical education program for male youthful offenders in a Virginia correctional institution.[1] The curricular project in physical education is one aspect of the "Youthful Offender Project" (YOP) sponsored by the Rehabilitative School Authority, a school system operated by the Department of Corrections in Virginia. This experimental project in Harrisonburg will serve as a model physical education program for schools with youthful offenders in other correctional units across the state.[2] The target population consisted of male youthful offenders between the ages of 18 and 21; most of them were school drop-outs; average length of incarceration was 6 months; and the maximum enrollment for the learning center was planned to be 72 at field unit No. 8 in Harrisonburg, Virginia. Formal interviews were conducted and a variety of instruments were used (including the Tennessee Self Concept Scale and Cooper's 1.5 mile aerobic test) by the investigator during the past year to 28 inmates. This sample represented the total number of misdemeanants who initially volunteered to be enrolled in the experimental school program at the prison with the goal of a high school equivalent diploma (GED). The results generally supported the predicted relationships among the youthful offenders indicating: negative self concepts, especially physical self concepts; low self-ratings in a variety of sports and games; a low level of circulorespiratory endurance; and poor skill performances in selected team sports. However, the majority of inmates liked their past school gym classes for different reasons, and expressed a desire to excell in physical activity. Finally, the YOP students were very interested in an individualized physical education program within the prison environment, since antisocial tendencies and a dislike of structured activity programs would make conventional teaching ineffective. Other needs generated by the experience of incarceration are also discussed. A proposed Physical Education program is described as detailed recommendations for the YOP Learning Center at the Harrisonburg field unit, within an individualized curricular framework involving student selection of various sports and conditioning activities. Performance objectives in a dual track system are suggested based upon inmate-student potential and previous involvement in physical activity. Instructional and recreational activities should be conducted be a trained physical educator, assisted by a teacher aide and undergraduate volunteers. Procedures for evaluation of the proposed physical education program for youthful offenders are also described in the report.

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[1] Additional data contained in the complete report, entitled Physical Education Program for Youthful Offenders, (93 pages) is available from the investigator.

[2] This study was supported by Title I, ESEA, Rehabilitative School Authority, Bureau of Corrections, Richmond, Virginia.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION FOR YOUTHFUL OFFENDERS IN A VIRGINIA CORRECTIONAL INSTITUTION: A PRELIMINARY REPORT

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Introduction

Given the AAHPER conference theme of human rights focusing also on diverse target populations, the basic need of inmates in correctional institutions for physical activity and recreation would seem to be an appropriate area for inquiry. Recent legal developments indicate an increased awareness of prisoners' rights including living conditions and adequate recreation. Beyond such humanitarian reform involving the prison environment, the trend toward advocacy of rehabilitation and various federal projects suggests the relevance of an effective physical education program. The purpose of this paper is to provide a brief summary of a comprehensive needs assessment as a preliminary report on a physical education program for male youthful offenders in a Virginia correctional institution.[1] The curricular project in physical education is one aspect of the "Youthful Offender Project" (YOP) sponsored by the Rehabilitative School Authority, a school system operated by the Department of Corrections in Virginia. (11) This experimental project in Harrisonburg will serve as a model physical education program for schools with youthful offenders in other correctional units across the state.[2]

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Review of Literature

In a statement regarding proposals for prison reform, Morris and Jacobs, specialists in criminal justice, have differentiated between the two concepts of humanitarian reform and the rehabilitative ideal. Regardless of the impact of efforts toward rehabilitation emphasizing social readjustment and educational skills, prison reforms should be vigorously pursued for humanitarian reasons. The prisoner, it is argued, should not be deprived of the basic needs of nutritious food, decent hygiene and adequate medical care and recreation. (9) Little systematic attention has been given in the United States to the educational and recreational needs of inmates in correctional institutions related to sports and conditioning activities. The current trends toward the development of basic "survival" skills, increased social exposure, and humane environments with provision for recreation, clearly support experimental projects in correctional physical education.

In a recent review of pertinent research, Yiannakis cited studies which indicate that youthful offenders avoid organized recreation programs, and that their recreational preferences differ substantially from those of nonoffenders. However, other studies suggest that such programs can be therapeutic depending upon the type of goals and organization, especially in the area of social relations. Because of the high dropout rate among participants in the National Summer Youth Sports Program with delinquent backgrounds, Yiannakis recommended individual and dual activities, rather than highly structured team sports, to encourage achievement and success. (13)

Hellison, reporting on a project with juvenile delinquents, has advocated a humanistic approach in sports instruction for alienated youth by providing flexible options and objective feedback from a concerned

teacher. This approach focuses on personal growth through supervised physical activity and social interaction.(5)

Johnson has recently described professional preparation and new career opportunities in physical education for employment in correctional institutions. In addition, he points out that in many instances, people who are employed in correctional institutions as therapists are white and middle class, while inmates are mostly minorities and lower class. (6) Based upon field experiences of his students as volunteer aides and coaches, Johnson has recommended techniques which encourage trust and success. He has noted that since inmates frequently disliked physical education programs in the public schools, a successful approach demands careful design and inplementation, in contrast to either "throwing the balls out" or a rigid instructional program. (7)

Statement of the Problem

The problem under consideration was to conduct a comprehensive assessment of the needs of youthful offenders in a correctional institution relative to physical education. The needs assessment phase of developing appropriate curricular activities involved gathering data from a sample of misdemeanants which would provide a baseline for planning a model program. Based upon the limited empirical evidence available, it was hypothesized that interviews and testing would reveal the following results among the inmates: low self-ratings in a variety of sports and games; negative self concepts, especially physical self concepts; low level of circulorespiratory endurance; a dislike of traditional school physical education; poor skill level in selected team sports; a desire to achieve in physical activity; and an interest in an individualized physical education program within the prison environment at the field learning center.

Procedures

The target population consisted of male youthful offenders between the ages of 18 and 21; most of them were school drop-outs; average length of incarceration was 6 months; and the maximum enrollment of the Youthful Offender Project was planned to be 72 at Field Unit No. 8 in Harrisonburg, Virginia. Formal interviews were conducted and a variety of instruments and tests were administered by the investigator during the past year to 28 inmates. This sample represented the total number of misdemeanants who initially volunteered to be enrolled in the experimental school program at the prison with the goal of a high school equivalent diploma (GED). The Youthful Offender Project (YOP) involves learning centers in several correctional institutions for delinquent children funded under Title I, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965, Virginia State Department of Education. The learning center at Harrisonburg was designed to feature several curricular areas including reading, mathematics, social studies, and physical education directed by a school principal and a staff of male and female teachers and aides. The instructional model for this experimental learning center represents an individualized, presciptive approach with self-paced units and a multi-media component, as well as group dynamics techniques. Because of the nature of the target population and the philosophy of the Youthful Offender Project, the dependent measures for the needs assessment phase in physical education included the following instruments and procedures:

1. Bigraphical Personal Interview Schedule (15 items)
2. Tennessee Self Concept Scale (100 items)
3. Self-Description Survey for Males - Part I (Values in Physical Education; 5 items)

4. Self-Description Survey for Males - Part II (Self Concept in Physical Education; 5 items)

5. Locus of Control Inventory (Psychomotor; 5 items)

6. Background Information - Part I (Activity Preference; 21 items)

7. Background Information - Part II (Self-Rating in Sports Skills; 21 items)

8. Aerobics Exercise Testing (1.5 mile test for males)

9. Sports Skill Tests (Soccer, Volleyball and Basketball)

10. Administrators and staff members at the learning center were asked to provide additional background information and program suggestions.

Personal interviews with the YOP students were conducted using a structured interview schedule. The intent was to obtain biographical data pertinent to physical education and to interact with the inmates through a personal interview which would permit more elaborate responses to questions of interest.

To provide additional data relative to the psychosocial needs of the target population, the Tennessee (Department of Mental Health) Self Concept Scale, was selected as a measure of the individual's perceptual field, which was developed by William H. Fitts in 1965. This instrument has been recently used as a research tool in physical education although its primary use has been in counseling clinical assessment and diagnosis, and research in the behaviorial sciences. Validity was demonstrated by successfully discriminating between groups of psychiatric patients and non-patients and the test correlated significantly with the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory and the Edwards Personal Preference Schedule. Test and re-test reliability coefficients (N=60) ranged in the .70's and .80's. (3) Test reviews of the scale have been favorable.(2,10)

The test can be used with subjects age 12 or higher who have at least a sixth grade reading level. The scale consists of five measures of the self: physical, moral-ethical, personal, family and social. The Physical Self Scale is most relevant to the physical education dimension of the YOP program. This sub-scale consists of 18 items which pertain to the individual's self conception of his body, his physical appearance, his state of health, skills, and sexuality. The total self concept score or Total P score, according to Fitts, is the most important single score on the Counseling Form. People with high scores tend to have a positive view of self, while people with low scores often feel anxious, and have little confidence in themselves.

Because of the relative low reading level of the YOP student group, standard instruments measuring specific attitudes toward physical activity a nd physical education could not be used. However, for the purposes of the needs assessment, three brief self-reports were assembled from items on unpublished instruments relevant to this project. It was hypothesized that if an individual values competence in physical activities (skills, conditioning, and positive attitudes of behavior), and if he experiences significant achievement in this area, then changes in self conception might be expected.

To measure perceived competency in a variety of specific sports, a brief check-list was administrered to the YOP group. Research has demonstrated a clear relationship between the level of past success experienced in an activity and the extent of later voluntary participation in that activity. The inmate-students were also asked to indicate 10 of these activities in order of preference as curricular subjects for physical education instruction.

One aspect of the proposed physical education program at the correctional unit, is the health dimension involving physical fitness. For the purpose of the YOP program, physical fitness was defined as endurance measured in terms of circulorespiratory capacity. Cooper's concept of "aerobics" was employed in this study based upon his extensive research involving the effects of physical conditioning on the human body. (1) In the area of preventive medicine, the aerobics program is currently receiving much attention.

Because of problems anticipated related to test administration, Cooper s 1.5 mile exercise test was selected. This is a field test based upon the time required to run a distance of 1.5 miles. A .25 mile distance around the large field at the Harrisonburg Correctional Unit was measured for conducting the test. Three YOP inmate-students were unable to perform the exercise test because of restrictions due to misconduct at the prison. Another two students had a negative attitude toward the test and refused to participate in the testing procedures. Several students however, were highly motivated and enjoyed the self-testing aspect of the 1.5 mile run, and they seemed to exert themselves for a good performance.

As another objective indicator of existing needs relative to physical education, a psychomotor test battery was administered at the learning center using two group. Specific skills in the following sports were tested: soccer (dribbling and passing); basketball (set shots and lay-ups); and volleyball (overhead pass and serve). Most YOP students seemed to enjoy performing the skills required in the tasks and requested a second practice trial. Other inmates appeared to become frustrated when experiencing little relative success on a given test and did not want to continue to perform for the duration of the test. In addition, four members of the group did not participate in the testing because they claimed to have

injuries or physical ailments that day. The scores were classified using four categories (Excellent, Good, Fair, and Poor) on the basis of criteria to determine level of achievement.

Results and Discussion

The following section is a brief summary of the results categorized according to the various needs assessment procedures.

1. Responses to personal interview questions indicated an average of 20.4 years among the sample which is slightly older than the average age of 19 reported for the target group in the Youthful Offender Project. For hometown: Rural 11; Suburban 5; Urban 12. The interview data provided an indication of educational needs based on their previous experiences in P.E. and athletics and expressed preferences relative to the proposed P.E. program at the learning center. When results were compared by type of community, differences in attitudes expressed were negligible. It was noted that about one-half of this group were black inmates who recently were transfered from the city jail in Richmond. The majority of the YOP students interviewed said they like secondary physical education very much. However, in response to other specific items, some students felt their coaches were authoritarian and were more interested in working with selected athletes than in teaching all students in physical education. Positive responses to an open-ended question concerned the variety of activities, the relationship with the instructor or coach, P.E. as an outlet for tensions, and the opportunity for recreational play. Few students mentioned specifically the competitive dimension of sports. Representative comments included:

> It gave us a good break from the classroom...the coach would talk to you...I was on dope and didn't want to dress out or play...we played games most of the time...it was the only subject I participated in...poor facilities...always somebody telling you what to do...you could work off a lot... I was ducking class that period...mind at ease...coach couldn't get everybody....whole lot of action and fun...some didn't like the activities.

Each inmate was asked, "What type of physical education program would you like to have here at this unit?" Although they were assured the program would be individualized based on their interests, the inmates seemed hesitant to openly indicate preferences. Further sub-questions produced responses concerning a proposed format for the P.E. program. Almost all the YOP students wanted a choice among activities.

They generally agreed to the use of task cards for weekly and daily prescriptions and monitoring of progress (as in their other academic subjects in the learning center) with each student setting his own objectives in the areas of skills, knowledge, and attitudes on an individual basis w ith the instructor. Some respondents, however, favored a group approach centering on team sports. Other concerns involved the need for periodic rap sessions with the instructor about the activities, program organization, and extent of cooperation among fellow students in the classes.

A final question was: "Do you feel that you could learn more about yourself and other students in a physical education class than in your other subjects?" The responses were: 22 (yes); 0 (none); and 6 (no difference). These results support the notion that physical education activities offer relatively greater opportunities for personal growth and social interaction than in other academic activities. This would seem to suggest the need for careful planning and positive teacher

expectations to maximize the potential impact of physical education experiences in developing the various dimensions of the inmate-student's self concept.

2. The raw scores for the Physical Self Scale (PSS) and the Total Self Concept (TSC) of the Tennessee instrument are contained in Table I. The average score on the Physical Self Scale for the YOP group tested (N=24) was 68.29. To interpret the results this mean score was compared with the normative data reported in the test manual, indicating a percentile ranking of approximately 28. Clearly, the YOP inmate-students expressed negative self conceptions in the area of body image, state of health, physical appearance, skills, and sexuality, as measured by the PSS. The mean Total Self Concept Score of 303.33 represented an approximate percentile rankingof 8 indicating a low total self concept, as predicted.

A study by Lefeber on the relationship between self concept and behavior using delinquent and non-delinquent subjects was reported by Fitts. (3) The PSS mean score for the YOP students was slightly below the norms reported for both first offenders and repeated offenders. The mean Total Self Concept score for the YOP group was slightly above the reported score of 300 for repeated offenders but was below the score of 312 described for first offenders, and well below the norms for the control group in Lefeber's study. It is apparent that these results indicate that generally the YOP students exhibited a low physical self and total self concept as measured by the Tennessee Self Concept Scale.

3. Concerning the Self-Description Survey items, the data showed the YOP students in this sample strongly valued the ability to perform well in physical activity. In addition in terms of social behavior, over one-half of the group felt that emotional self control in games was very important.

TABLE I

RAW SCORES FOR TENNESSEE SELF CONCEPT SCALE

FOR YOP STUDENTS

Subject	Physical Self Scale	Total Self Concept
1	65	315
2	63	301
3	58	268
4	58	265
5	59	261
6	74	286
7	64	297
8	71	335
9	78	381
10	46	252
11	64	290
12	75	336
13	75	338
14	48	285
15	69	319
16	73	331
17	72	343
18	74	329
19	74	329
20	75	332
21	62	313
22	82	362
23	84	392
24	76	349

4. Generally, results indicated that the respondents had positive self concepts in the areas of sport and physical education, but that they frequently lost control of their tempers in sports. The P.E. program at the learning center should focus on social behavior in sports based upon these data. In addition, several students did not do well previously in gym classes which suggests a need for an individualized approach to P.E. instruction.

5. With regard to the Locus of Control Inventory, the students generally felt that they could exert control over the results of their performance in physical activity, contrary to the predicted findings.

6. As expected, strong relationships were evident between positive self-ratings in skill and team sports frequently taught in the public schools, such as basketball, flag football,and volleyball. Another predicted finding was the relatively low self-ratings in sports usually associated with groups high in socio-economic level, including golf and tennis as lifetime sports. These students perceived themselves as below average or at a beginning skill level in activities recently added to the school curriculum such as handball and weight training, for example.

7. The YOP students were asked to indicate 10 of these activities in order of preference as curricular subjects for P.E. instruction. Again, the relationship between past experience in team sports and preferences was evident. Recreational activities, such as bowling and pool were also favored. It is interesting to note that other activities, such as weight training, wrestling, and track and field involving vigorous physical activity and strength were given high rankings by many inmates. Johnson has reported in another correctional setting, that basketball and weight training were the most popular activities if conducted on an informal basis.(7)

Another important finding on the preference check-list was that almost one-half of the YOP students selected tennis and handball representing examples of new sports for instruction. Previous personal interviews with this group also revealed suggestions for quiet recreational games, such as chess and checkers, to be included in the program.

8. The performance of the group (N=20) during the aerobics exercise testing indicated a low level of physical fitness, according to Cooper's criteria, for the majority of the inmates, as predicted. It would appear that, the YOP students could benefit from a aerobic program by participating in a variety of vigorous sports andconditioning activities. The physical involvement would lead to improved fitness performance levels and also provide a positive outlet for relief of the stresses within a prison environment.

9. As expected, many of the inmate-students performed poorly on the sports skill tests in contrast to the reported self-ratings previously discussed. Skill tests in activities other than popular team sports, such as tennis or golf, would probably produce even greater learning deficits. These lifetime carry-over activities have not been emphasized in most school P.E. programs due to a lack of equipment and facilities. It is evident that effective instruction in a variety of sports, games, and conditioning activities is needed for the YOP target population.

10. Informal interviews with the Superintendent of Correctional Unit No. 8, the prison sounselor, the school principal, and the entire staff of the learning center were also conducted. These individuals provided valuable insights relative to the needs of the target population as well as information concerning the educational context of the YOP program planned for the learning center. In addition, later site visits by various staff members associated with the Rehabilitative School Authority in

Richmond and federal programs generated general guidelines and expectations for the YOP program. These persons viewed physical education as an integral part of the total educational program at the learning center.

It should be noted that the comprehensive YOP proposal document has effectively discussed the causes which generated incarceration. (11) Such conditions as the "cycle of poverty," a lack of fundamental survival skills or values system, and unequal educational opportunities have resulted in a variety of disabling factors relevant to physical education, such as poor health habits, low physical and total self concept, and little chance of the kind of positive fulfillment available to others through recreation programs.

Other needs, as outlined in the YOP proposal statement, are generated by the experience of incarceration. (11) The structural variables which often produce inactivity, boredom, and a negative process of socialization among inmates strongly point to the potential benefits of a comprehensive physical education program. The lack of stimulating sports experiences as well as exercise programs characteristic of most correctional institutions do not contribute toward humane prison environments. The educational problems previously outlined are dramatically increased by the denial of these basic drives among inmates for physical activity and recreation through a conditioning and sports program.

Conclusion

The results of this study support the predicted relationships among the youthful offenders indicating: negative self concepts, especially physical self concepts; low self-ratings in a variety of sports and games; a low level of circulorespiratory endurance; and poor skills performances in selected team sports. However the majority of inmates liked their

past school gym classes for different reasons and expressed a desire to achieve in physical activity. Finally, the YOP students were very interested in an individualized physical education program within the prison environment, since antisocial tendencies and a dislike of structured activity programs would make conventional teaching approaches ineffective.

Recommendations

Based upon the reported needs assessment, and guided by available research and theory, a comprehensive physical education program should be instituted at Correctional Unit No. 8 as a model for other learning centers in Virginia. The possibilities for a more open and positive prison climate can be realized through the enjoyment resulting from recreational activity among the inmate-students and in contests with teams of "outside groups." The program should be designed to meet the diverse health and educational needs identified in this study through prescriptive techniques and small-group instruction for maximal achievement consistent with the goals of other subjects in the YOP curriculum.

Because of the characteristics of part of the target population, one feature of this approach involves two alternative tracks or options. Track I should be for YOP students with negative background experiences in P.E. or a dislike of physical activity. Performance objectives for inmate-students in Track I should primarily emphasize affective objectives focusing on the extent of attendance and voluntary participation in the program. Instruction should be provided in a given activity if requested by this group. As soon as possible, individuals in this category should be shifted to Track II through positive activity experiences, peer influence, and encouragement from the P.E. instructor. Track II should represent the instructional component of the P.E. program emphasizing self-directed

learning within a choice of sports activities. The roles of the P.E. instructor and teacher aide should primarily be that of facilitator and resource person. Each mini-course should be designed as flexible curricular experiences with different objectives with respect to student ability and interest in the activity. The performance of each YOP students should be reviewed in weekly conferences with the instructor after the diagnostic phase of pretests at the beginning of each mini-course.

An important dimension of this process should be the reduction of avoidance behaviors among YOP inmate-students and the increase of approach behaviors relative to physical activity and the P.E. program. Such affective outcomes as the extent of receiving, responding, and valuing behaviors should be significant factors in determining the impact of instruction in physical education and of physical activity experiences as recreation at the learning center. As noted in studies previously cited, the instructor must attempt to develop a relationship of trust with the inmates through an atmosphere of concern and quality instruction if the program is to be successful. Through discussions in rap sessions, class periods, and interpersonal interactions, the instructor as facilitator should promote such outcomes in sport as respect for other performers, adherence to rules, and a sense of fair play. To provide increased social exposure to young adults from "the outside," sports clinics should be conducted by skilled physical education majors from nearby Madison College in a variety of activities. These individualized experiences should also assist in motivating the YOP students to participate and learn new sports activities.

Attention should be given to the scope and scheduling of the recreational activities for inmates on week-ends under the supervision of correctional officers. These recreational periods could be integrated with the P.E.

curricular activities as a follow-up to instruction and conditioning during the week for increased enjoyment and a sense of achievement.

Sufficient modern equipment (e.g. multi-station weight training machine) and supplies should be provided for effective instruction. Written policies concerning the P.E. program should be developed in such areas as: the care and cleaning of activity clothing, attendance, showers, and class organization. To implement these recommendations, maximum use of available indoor space, grading of field areas and an all-weather surface would be essential to insure a successful program.

In summary, the proposed Physical Education program for the YOP Learning Center at Harrisonburg should be individualized within a curricular framework involving student selection of individual/dual and team sports, and conditioning activities. Psychomotor achievement of performance objectives should be determined by skill tests, task cards, and teacher check-lists; affective objectives should be measured by attendance in class sessions, questionnaires, peer comments, and behavioral descriptions; and cognitive achievement should be assessed by written tests and oral questions by the instructor.

The basic need among the inmate-students for physical activity as an outlet for tensions, exercise, and recreational enjoyment strongly supports the proposed physical education program to enhance the environment at the correctional unit. In addition, this individualized P.E. curriculum which would teach basic skills, new lifetime sports, and aerobics could increase the impact of the "second chance" offered to the YOP student. The procedures for following up the post-release of the target population should include efforts to determine the extent of physical activity and sports participation among the YOP students. These

data would be helpful in determining the impact and efficacy of the P.E. program for the inmate-student population in developing a desire to engage in sports or conditioning activities as part of a healthy life style.

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